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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

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9 November 1967
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AGENCY ARCHIVES

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C O N T E N T S

(Information as of noon EST, 8 November 1967)

Far East

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THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE	1
VIETNAM The Communists' current offensive at Loc Ninh appears to be the initial thrust of their anticipated "winter-spring" campaign.	3

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FAR EAST

Hanoi appears to be making a vigorous effort to counter the inauguration of the new South Vietnamese Government with a major show of strength.

North Vietnamese propaganda is portraying last week's attacks at Loc Ninh as retaliation for intensified US air strikes in the Hanoi area and as the opening of a "winter-spring" campaign. Repeated Communist assaults on Loc Ninh, at the cost of nearly 1,000 troops killed in action, suggest an attempt to establish another "front" in the northern III Corps area adjacent to Cambodia, similar to the one in the Demilitarized Zone area, as well as to score a psychological victory. Increased Communist military pressure in III Corps, the Mekong Delta, and the western highlands has been accompanied by a tough restatement of Hanoi's position on negotiations by North Vietnamese party first secretary Le Duan in Moscow.

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VIETNAM

The much-heralded Communist "winter-spring" campaign is apparently under way in the III and IV Corps areas. Moreover, extensive enemy battle preparations in the western highlands indicate a new offensive may soon begin there.

There are signs that elements of the Communist B-3 Front--the over-all command authority in Kontum, Pleiku, and Darlac provinces--are preparing to attack US and South Vietnamese installations throughout the area. Several sharp skirmishes and enemy mortar attacks have already occurred in normally calm Darlac and in the Dak To area of Kontum.

The Communists have at least four regiments in Kontum, in addition to the headquarters and associated support elements of the B-3 Front and the North Vietnamese 1st Division. A recent defector claimed a major attack was to have begun on 28 October--coincident with the Loc Ninh offensive--but a "failure in coordinated artillery" forced postponement. This "artillery" could include large-caliber rockets that may be used in a large-scale, well-coordinated assault on allied positions.

The Communist offensive activity in northern III Corps has resulted in extensive enemy losses since the present phase began on 28 October, with nearly 1,000 men reportedly killed thus far. It is possible, however, that the Communists hope to establish a "second front" in this sector, which is similar in many respects to the area south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The terrain, with its thick stands of rubber trees and dense jungle, is favorable to enemy operations. Furthermore, Cambodia, just a few miles to the north, offers a nearby sanctuary for rest and resupply.

The Communist intention would be to draw in and tie down substantial allied forces in a long, inconclusive campaign. Already, five US Army battalions totaling some 4,000 men--in addition to South Vietnamese reinforcements--have been deployed to the Loc Ninh - Song Be area.

This week's activity in the northern III Corps area included several large-scale enemy assaults on the recently reinforced allied defensive positions. One encounter between South Vietnamese and Communist forces near Song Be on 5 November resulted in high friendly casualties, caused in part by the enemy enjoying the tactical advantage of prepared positions. In the battle, 96 South Vietnamese were killed, 36 were wounded, and 56 weapons were lost.

Throughout the Mekong Delta provinces of IV Corps there has been a sharp increase in enemy attacks against friendly night defensive positions as well as against lightly defended base camps and remote district towns. The attacks inflicted heavy casualties on at least one ARVN unit and almost totally destroyed a Revolutionary Development team. Such casualties have little effect on allied troop strength, but the psychological

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impact on the local populace is considerable because the enemy actions create doubt as to the ability of allied forces to establish and maintain adequate security.

South Vietnamese Politics

South Vietnam's new government is getting under way slowly. The failure so far to appoint and announce the full cabinet may give rise to speculation that internal difficulties are already besetting the regime. The lower house, inactive since its inauguration on 31 October, still has to complete the validation of the election of its members. This process may be complicated by the disqualification of one winner in Kien Giang Province on charges of an election law violation.

Even though the house has not met, there is already talk of the formation of at least one political bloc. A former associate of Vice President Ky is taking credit for the election of some 31 members of the house and is referring to them as the "Democratic Bloc." His one attempt to get some 28 of these members to commit themselves to a formal political grouping was a failure, however, largely because the representatives themselves probably have decided to wait and see how alliances shape up when the assembly convenes.

Evidence continues to accumulate indicating dissatisfaction in the ranks of the Buddhist church over the manner in which the leaders of the militant and moderate factions are handling the current crisis over the charter. Sentiment appears to be growing to bypass both Thich Tri Quang and Thich Tam Chau in efforts to reach a settlement. [redacted] 3.3(h)(2) the present split in the Buddhist church can be healed only if the extremists in both factions are bypassed and more moderate elements allowed to work out a solution.

One possible indicator of a less rigid posture on the part of the militants is their reported order to the clergy to cease self-immolations, to continue nonviolent struggle activities, and to protest directly to President Thieu about government interference in the internal affairs of the Buddhist church.

The Soviet Anniversary

Statements by Vietnamese Communist spokesmen in both Moscow and Hanoi on the 50th anniversary of the Soviet revolution have been replete with praise for the USSR and the importance of Soviet assistance to the Vietnamese revolution. Party First Secretary Le Duan, speaking before the Supreme Soviet on 3 November, spelled out Hanoi's toughest terms for talks with the US and for a settlement of the war.

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Ridiculing what he termed "profuse talk about false peace," he restated Hanoi's demand that the "four points" and the program of the Liberation Front serve as the basis for settlement. He added, moreover, that if the US wants talks with the North Vietnamese it must "definitively and unconditionally" end the bombings of the DRV.

Le Duan also provided Hanoi's major pronouncement on the anniversary in an article in the party daily urging socialist unity in the most specific language used recently by any Vietnamese Communist spokesman.

While the over-all thrust of the article was probably pleasing to the Soviets, Le Duan also stressed the necessity of revolutionary violence as an ingredient of national liberation movements. In keeping with Hanoi's continuing efforts to stay neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute, Le Duan seemed mainly concerned with reminding both Peking and Moscow that their differences must not be allowed to undermine the Communist effort in Vietnam.

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